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SUPERVISED STUDY IN THE EVERETT HIGH SCHOOL

ALEXANDER C. ROBERTS
Everett, Washington

Pointed necessity quite as often as deliberate choice brings us to a break with old conditions and opens the way to radical progress. The introduction of the double-period program in any high school is a radical step; just how radical it is may be grasped by a comparison of the schedules of the English, history, and foreign language departments in this high school in the first semester of the year 1914-15 with the second.

THE CHANGE

Under the old schedule the school day began at 8:55 and closed at 2:35. The first twenty minutes were given to a study period in the rolls and then followed seven forty-five-minute periods. Two of these were lunch periods, in one of which each student and teacher had forty-five minutes for lunch. Seven study-hall periods and seven library periods were maintained, with a teacher in charge of each. Required gymnasium work was taken twice each week by all first-year students at the time of one of their study periods. To accommodate special groups of students, classes in benchwork, mechanical drawing, and typewriting were offered at 8:10 each day. Teachers regularly taught five classes, none of which we aimed to make over twenty-five in membership.

Under the new program, the school day extends from 9:00 to 3:45—four ninety-minute periods and a lunch period of forty-five minutes. We have no separate rolls; the first-period teacher acts as roll teacher for the members of his class. As before, we have two lunch periods, splitting the third period, as will be explained later. There are no study-hall periods; in their stead each student in regular assignment has three hours of supervised study daily—forty-five minutes with each of his four teachers. Approximately half of the classes recite the first half of the period; the others have

study first. Gymnasium work twice each week is taken during the study period of one subject and for the study period missed the work must be prepared at home. Work in several half-credit subjects is offered at 8:10, and from 100 to 250 students come at that time. Teachers regularly have four classes, excepting in a few instances where two small sections of advanced work have been combined in one ninety-minute period.

CAUSES AND PURPOSES OF REORGANIZATION

The completion of the first survey of the high-school records showing that slightly over 20 per cent of all the students during the four years previous had failed, dropped out, or been incomplete brought sharply to the mind of every member of the faculty the need of solving the problem of the draining away of this large percentage.

During the first semester every classroom was in use every period of the day excepting the two lunch periods, while the study-hall rolls ran from 150 to 240 students. An eighth period was inevitable, which meant an additional study-hall period for each student, or an increase of an average of 110 students for each study period. Since the Study Hall seats but 250, it followed that additional study halls must be provided, with teachers in charge, for each period of the day. A mid-year class of 175 which was about to enter the high school meant more classrooms, more teachers, and more teaching periods.

This change was induced also by the feeling that the study of the pupils at school was wholly ineffective. The large study-hall rolls, numbering about 200, with the noise and distractions incident to the activity of so many, furnished anything but an atmosphere of study. This study, where seriously undertaken, was entirely unsupervised and often led aimlessly nowhere. It was impossible to secure adequate reference work in the library, and where any class study was undertaken it was at the expense of regular recitation work.

We came to feel that a considerable share of the home study was likewise ineffective and futile. By letters to the parents and patrons, by special tests, by supplication and adjuration, efforts

to secure the two hours of home study necessary for strong work were made, but in vain. As teachers we realized that the finest intellectual atmosphere existed in many homes, but for the most part, home study was ineffective. In many cases poor light, family conversation, the performance of home duties, the ebb and flow of the family life effectually cut off the student from quiet, effective study. Again, the pupil was caught by some difficulty, father and mother could not help; and after considerable floundering about, the time was wasted and nothing done. In many other cases the pupils were out of the home every night and no effective study resulted.

With this feeling, therefore, of helplessness in the face of poor lesson preparation, we approached the problem of reorganization with these broad purposes before us: to render our work more valuable by improving the quality of instruction and by improving the quality of material covered; to bring the pupil and teacher together in another and more helpful relation; to make of the recitation hour something more vital than a quizzing and testing time; to demonstrate that in our work the teacher had not become an automatic recitation-receiving device and a machine lesson-assigning apparatus; and, summing it all up, to secure vivid, lasting, and solid results by securing purposeful, directed, economical study.

During the morning-roll study period of twenty minutes a determined effort was constantly made to connect up the work by helpful criticisms and directions, but in many cases pupils in study rolls had no recitations whatever with the roll teacher, and hence could be given little effective assistance. Likewise the study-period and library-period teachers were anxious to assist the students, but, for the same reasons, little was accomplished.

For a considerable time an afternoon study-class of forty-five minutes was maintained, with a competent substitute teacher in charge, and students were permitted or strongly advised, as the case required, to attend this special-help class. Much good was accomplished, but the range of work in which the teacher could offer really effective help was far short of the entire range of high-school activity.

For many years every teacher was required to remain at least twenty minutes each night in his classroom, and, on one night each week, for an entire period, to offer assistance to those students who desired it. Here again much good was accomplished, but the time of day was not favorable for help, and most of the teachers felt that there was too much of going out into the highways to compel them to come in.

The latest development in the effort to bridge the gap between teacher and pupil was the adviser system, whereby each faculty man acted as a sort of big brother to a group of the boys and each faculty woman sought to help in every way possible a group of the girls who had been assigned to her. In hundreds of cases a splendid relation has grown up, and the plan is still in use.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS THAT WERE TO BE SOLVED

The problems of adjustment group under four heads: the course of study, students, teachers, and daily program.

The course of study.—For the first time the so-called two-period subjects came definitely into their own. In scores of cases students had avoided them, since it required *two* periods to earn *one* credit. At once increased enrolment in science, vocational, and commercial subjects was apparent. A corresponding advantage accrued at once to the half-credit subjects, penmanship, commercial arithmetic, typewriting, art, etc., for now several of them could be taken for forty-five minutes daily with half-credit, or ninety minutes daily with full credit. Again, any combination of two of them could be taken during a double period and a half-credit in each earned.

Properly arranged field trips were very difficult to carry out under the old schedule, and practically nothing could be done before the close of school in the afternoon. With a full hour and a half at the disposal of a class, very successful short trips have frequently been taken by students in botany, biology, chemistry, physiography, and agriculture.

It was customary under the old schedule to have chorus during the twenty-minute morning-study period three times each week. Under the new schedule, all work in music goes to the period

following the close of school. The result has been beneficial in the extreme.

Under the old schedule, students in gymnasium *had to go* twice each week from their study-hall period, with the result that the classes always contained students in each semester of the work. Under the new plan, it has been easy to keep the students separated by semesters, and the gain has been very satisfactory.

Purely from the standpoint of administration of the course of study the change has been easy and exceedingly beneficial in every way.

STUDENTS

Reducing the number of recitation periods per day from seven to four tended to make the program less pliable, and much consideration was required to solve the various students' problems that arose at once. In the first place, a large number of students in an industrial community like this are required to work in order to be able to attend school. By special resolution of the Board of Education, students may be excused at three o'clock daily in order to retain their positions. This granting of forty-five minutes to about thirty students each semester has solved that problem.

A number of postgraduates have always been in school doing special work. The desire to give them the greatest possible assistance and to make the most of the double periods led to the establishment of a full year of college and normal work.

The unclassified student who desires part work and the bright student who desires and can carry five subjects presented probably the most serious problem to be solved. Finally, by a rather simple expedient, we were able to care for these groups. Approximately half of the classes were assigned to study during the first half of the period and to recite the second half. The remainder were assigned to recite first and study second. By this means the unclassified student could get two subjects in an hour and a half and prepare both at home, and the five-subject student could recite in both halves of a period, prepare both at home, and take the other three subjects in the regular periods.

This arbitrary arrangement could be varied to meet the particular needs of the individual pupil also, and has rendered the

program even more flexible than the old program, for it has eight half-periods into which to schedule the students rather than the seven periods of the old schedule.

The bright student deserves careful and special consideration, and by this plan we have been able to provide four and one-half, five, and five and one-half credits of work, according to the interests and abilities of individual students. We have adopted also the plan of permitting pupils to schedule for an extra half or full credit in the subject of their greatest interest, and by special assignments and library work have been able to extend the scope of the work to justify the special credit.

Small sections of advanced work have always presented serious problems in cost maintenance. Cutting the number of recitations of teachers from five to four made even more serious the problem of the small class. This was completely obviated, however, by combining two small classes of advanced work in a period of one hour and a half, and giving that teacher thereby five classes daily. It is by this means possible to maintain a class of but a very few members, since the cost of tuition is shared by some other small class. We have had six or seven of these combined classes each semester, and the plan works very well.

Conflicts we always have with us, but with the classes varying as to recitation and study, and with eight instead of seven periods to schedule into, the double-period plan offers even a wider range than the single periods and conflicts are correspondingly reduced.

From the standpoint of the student, therefore, the advantages seem to lie with the double periods.

TEACHERS

The question has repeatedly been asked if the double-period plan did not require more teachers than the single-period plan. By means of combining two small sections of advanced work into one double period, by raising the limit of the number of students in large classes from twenty-five to thirty, by abolishing the study halls, thereby releasing seven periods of time of the best teachers in the high school, and by having a librarian, thereby releasing seven more periods of time, we have been able to care for more

pupils per teacher than under the old plan. Table I shows the relative numbers of pupils to teachers during the past five and one-half years; in the last two semesters we have had the double-period plan in operation.

TABLE I

| Time | No. of Teachers | Total Enrolment | Average per Teacher |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| First Semester, 1910-11..... | 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 584 | 21.2 |
| Second Semester, 1910-11..... | 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 525 | 19.1 |
| First Semester, 1911-12..... | 32 | 600 | 18.7 |
| Second Semester, 1911-12..... | 32 | 594 | 18.5 |
| First Semester, 1912-13..... | 33 | 559 | 16.9 |
| Second Semester, 1912-13..... | 33 | 679 | 20.6 |
| First Semester, 1913-14..... | 34 | 691 | 20.3 |
| Second Semester, 1913-14..... | 36 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 760 | 20.9 |
| First Semester, 1914-15..... | 38 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 800 | 20.6 |
| Second Semester, 1914-15..... | 41 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 923 | 22.1 |
| First Semester, 1915-16..... | 42 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 970 | 22.6 |

Teachers regularly have four classes each day which average from three to five pupils larger in number than under the old plan. The school day is over an hour longer, giving the only vital objection to the double-period plan, for we feel that in some cases it makes the period of continuous work too extended and wearing both upon the teachers and the pupils. This is balanced in large measure by the fact that the teachers are able to prepare their work during their study periods, thus reducing the amount of night work. It is not necessary to hold protracted sessions after school hours with students who are behind in their work, for abundant opportunity offers during the forty-five minutes of study with each class. The study period was particularly a teachers' problem, and it required some legislation and much effort to get all the teachers to realize that quiet study was better for their students, while affording them effective work in lesson planning and the correction of papers.

THE DAILY PROGRAM

As might be expected, the most serious problems were involved in the construction of a workable daily program. I have attempted to enumerate the principal problems we encountered and in a brief statement to give our solution for each.

In order to secure the proper amount of supervised study it was necessary to lengthen the school day from four hours and fifty-five minutes to six hours. This meant a continuous session from 9:00 A.M. to 3:45 P.M., with a forty-five minute lunch period at noon. While the day seems long, it disposes of the grave question involving the economical use of an expensive school plant that was occupied less than five hours per day.

The handling of attendance records was in the hands of roll teachers in designated roll rooms. By making the first-period teachers the roll teachers for their classes, the rolls were much smaller and more evenly distributed.

The lunch period would have presented no difficulty had we been able to close school at 12:00 M. and resume at 12:45 P.M. or 1:00 P.M., with all pupils and teachers dismissed at that time. The limited cafeteria service precluded that system, and we were compelled to retain the two-lunch period plan, with approximately half the pupils and teachers dismissed for each. The problem was solved in this way. Half the teachers were assigned to go to lunch at 12:00 M., and all the students in their classes likewise went to lunch at that time. These teachers and pupils assembled at 12:45 P.M. to begin their third-period work. The other teachers were assigned to go to lunch at 12:45 P.M., hence they met their third-period pupils at 12:00 o'clock and held the first half of that period's work. At 12:45 P.M., teachers and pupils went to lunch, and reassembled at 1:30 P.M. for the last half of the third period. This so-called splitting of the third period solved a serious problem, and has proved very satisfactory.

With forty-five minutes given for lunch and but twenty to twenty-five required for lunching in the cafeteria, the problem of providing a gathering-place for students for the remainder of the period has always been troublesome. Under the old plan, with the Assembly Room in use as a study hall, students were permitted to enter the Library until the chairs were all occupied, to go into the Study Hall if they desired to study, and to gather in several classrooms not in use that period and especially designated for that purpose. At present, the Study Hall is utilized as a gathering-place, and, with the large number of desks and ample space, is

much more satisfactory in every way. In the same way, under the old plan, from four to six teachers were constantly on hall duty during the noon periods; since the introduction of the double-period plan and the use of the Study Hall, no teacher has been on hall duty.

A very serious problem arises out of the fact that a considerable number of country pupils spend the week-end with their people. Boats, trains, interurban cars, and auto stages leave at 3:00 and 3:30 P.M., and we have found it necessary to excuse many students early each Friday afternoon in order to reach their homes that evening.

The system of segregated classes has suffered somewhat by the introduction of supervised study, for it has proved impossible to arrange the schedule to afford as nearly complete segregation as we had under the old program. By special care in planning the new program, however, we have been able to continue most of the classes we desired to segregate.

Just how to get the greatest use out of the Library required special and careful consideration. With the Library adjacent to the Study Hall, it was possible for students to secure library assistance quickly and easily, although much time was wasted through unskilful searching for needed material. With the change to double periods, two plans were adopted to secure the greatest possible use of the Library. First, students are now assigned directly to the Library by the class teacher for work with the general reference books. Secondly, large numbers of special books are drawn by the teachers for use in their classrooms, and are available for reference by the students without leaving the room.

Assemblies are held whenever occasion requires, usually at 9:00 o'clock, and lasting thirty minutes. Under the old program, the time of one of the twenty-minute morning study periods was taken; now we take fifteen minutes from each double period in the morning and go on the regular program at noon. This plan works less hardship upon the class work and is much more satisfactory.

High-school gatherings in the evening on school nights have always been more or less under the ban. With these hours of

supervised study during the day, many of the old objections have disappeared, and we are now permitting many more of these gatherings—inter-group basket-ball games, class parties that close about 9:30 P.M., literary meetings, etc. Supervised study has worked greatly to the advantage of the high school as a community center.

THE PROGRAM IN OPERATION

After two semesters' trial, we have come to believe that from every viewpoint supervised study has been a success. We know that each pupil has a chance for at least three hours of quiet, effective study, and actually does some study. The bright student who can get his lesson in fifteen minutes has been provided for by better and more extended reference work—especially in history, English, and science. The direct result has been more and better organized work, leading directly to a rise in the standard demanded. We have found that the students who are carrying two subjects in the same period and preparing both at home are the ones having the most trouble. In the same way, the students who are excused for gymnasium twice each week from the study period of some subject have special difficulty in keeping up in that subject. Students who cannot concentrate upon the preparation of purely academic work or who will not give the systematic and thorough attention to the preparation of this work—that small group who are in school in order to enjoy a respectable loafing place—are, some of them, finding a place in the purely technical and vocational subjects, and the rest are being rapidly and effectively eliminated from the school. Although the day is longer, the interest does not flag, the pupils are not overwearied, and the work of the day is nearly all completed at the close of the school session.

Supervised study helps the teacher, for he sees the effort put forth by the students—he sees the student mind at work. This opportunity leads unerringly to a finer appreciation of the viewpoint and difficulties of the pupils, and in turn to better assignments, better teaching, and consequently better results. Since the teachers are able to do most of their lesson preparation in class, they are not called upon for as much night work.

On the whole, parents approve of the plan, since they realize the advantages of study with more favorable surroundings for study than the home afforded. Two criticisms of parents have reached me: one that the double-period plan made it more difficult to keep the children at home evenings, for they no longer had so many lessons to prepare, and the other that this plan permitted the parents to take the children with them to their places of social recreation without a sense of sinning against their children's future welfare by taking them from their studies. Aside from the longer day, a large proportion of the students offer hearty approval of the plan, as several frankly written and unsigned criticisms attest; and the reasons most often assigned are the privileges of efficient help, saving time, more time for outside activities, better grades earned, etc.

The question has frequently been raised by teachers whether or not supervised study might not result in dependent students. There is a danger here—just the danger that has always existed in science laboratory periods, shop classes, mechanical drawing work, bookkeeping—no more, no less. The teacher might be drawn into doing the work for the students, but is not. The fact is that supervised study has led to a very great increase in independent study; there is no use in borrowing problems and exercises, when the pupil has the time, and supervision, and help to do the work himself. Quoting the words of a neighboring principal in whose school supervised study has been in successful operation for several years, I sum up the problem of adequate lesson preparation, thus: "The double-period plan certainly calls the bluff on the bright rascal who has been giving about ten minutes daily to each lesson, and passing. Having nothing else to do, he studies throughout the period and does excellent work in spite of himself."

In conclusion, we believe that supervised study in the form we have it is a success, but not the final solution of this great problem; it is a step, an arrow, at once an indication and the recognition of a tendency to correct one of the weak spots in our work. It will serve its day and purpose, and be superseded by some plan which will eliminate the difficulties and add to the advantages which we have noted for the double-period plan.